

# Australian Dictionary of Biography

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## Davies, David (1864–1939)

by **Candice Bruce**

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David Davies (1864-1939), artist, was born on 21 May 1864 at Ballarat, Victoria, son of Thomas Davies, miner, and his wife Mary, née Harris. His parents were both from South Wales; David was one of six children. As a boy he attended both Redan and Sebastopol state schools and later art classes at the Ballarat School of Mines and Industries. He worked for a short time for a jeweller in Bridge Street, Ballarat, and then in 1887-90 studied at the National Gallery School, Melbourne, under **G. F. Folingsby**. In 1885 he became a member of the Buonarotti Club whose members included **E. Phillips Fox**, **Frederick McCubbin** and **Tom Roberts**. In the late 1880s he and Roberts, **Conder**, **Streeton**, **Walter Withers** and others frequently painted at Eaglemont, near Heidelberg, at a property owned by Charles Davies, the brother of Davies's future wife. One of his best-known paintings from this period, 'The Burden and Heat of the Day', was subsequently purchased by the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery.

In 1890 Davies left Australia to study in Paris at the Académie Julian under Jean-Paul Laurens.

### Life Summary [\[details\]](#)

#### Birth

21 May 1864  
Ballarat, Victoria, Australia

#### Death

26 March 1939  
Looe, Cornwall, England

#### Cultural Heritage

- Welsh

#### Occupation

- landscape artist
- painter

He took a studio flat at 2 Rue d'Odessa and on 18 December 1891 at the British consulate he married fellow student Janet Sophia Davies; **Rupert Bunny** and Aby Altson were the witnesses. Soon after their marriage Davies and his wife went to live at St Ives, Cornwall, England, which was already popular with such expatriate Australians as Phillips Fox, Edmund Wyly Grier and the latter's brother Louis. The predominant style at St Ives was that of Whistlerian softness and emphasis on the atmospheric effects of light and mood. It was a style that had enormous appeal for Davies and on his return to Australia in 1893 he began painting romantic impressions of the landscape in the late afternoon and evening light. Davies and his wife settled at Templestowe, Victoria; a daughter was born there, but died a few months later. 'Moonrise', a painting from this period, was purchased by the National Gallery of Victoria; **J. S. MacDonald** in his small book on Davies described it as 'unique in the beauty of its presentation of all those difficult, elusive components that make up the theme'. Early in 1896, shortly after the birth of a second daughter, the family moved to Cheltenham, Victoria.

In 1897 they returned to England, settling again at St Ives. Next year Davies moved to nearby Lelant Down and over the next few years began exhibiting at the New English Art Club, the Royal Academy and the Ridley Art Club. After the birth of a son in January 1900 the family moved along the coast to Carbis Bay, then to Newquay and Tintagel and finally to Wales.

In 1908, probably in an attempt to improve his health, Davies and his family went to live in Dieppe, France, where Janet taught English at a girls' school. At the outbreak of World War I they returned to live in London but afterwards settled again at Dieppe. Davies continued to send paintings to England for exhibition. He left Dieppe from time to time to paint with his friend and sponsor Richard Heyworth in the Cheltenham (England) area and particularly from Heyworth's studio at Sennybridge in the Brecon Beacons in Wales. His paintings from this period were mainly French village scenes and landscapes.

In May 1926 an exhibition of 21 oils and 52 watercolours, mainly French landscapes, was held at the Fine Art Society's galleries, Melbourne. It seems to have been his only one-man exhibition in Australia during his lifetime and was a great success, although he probably never received payment for works sold. In 1932 Davies and his family settled at Looe, Cornwall, and a large exhibition of his work was shown at the Plymouth City Art Gallery.

Davies died at Looe on 26 March 1939 of cardio-vascular degeneration. Five days later his wife

Janet died of pneumonia. They were survived by their son and daughter.

### Select Bibliography

- J. MacDonald, *The Art and Life of David Davies* (Melb, 1920)
- A. A. Cowden, *David Davies, the Expatriate Period* (Lond, 1978)
- *Age* (Melbourne) 13 May 1926
- *Argus* (Melbourne), 13 May 1926, 10 Aug 1929, camera supplement: David Davies papers (State Library of Victoria).

### Related Entries in NCB Sites

- [Fox, Emanuel Phillips](#) (colleague)  

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